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New Stuff I Just Got

Amiga Software Reviews by Bill Raecke

BLOOD MONEY by PSYGNOSIS

Psygnosis is a company known for producing action games that set standards in graphics. Blood Money is no exception. Blood Money, in fact, pushes those standards farther than they have been pushed to date. It is nothing short of remarkable. Having said that right at the start, it's difficult to know where to go with this review, but I'll try.

You boot this game as you do most games on the Amiga, by inserting the game disk at the Workbench prompt. Soon thereafter the similarity ends. The title sequence will definitely get your attention. After a short loading period during which a still picture of the game cover art work is displayed, the opening animation begins. A beautifully digitized voice welcomes you to the game -- then the action starts. The view is from behind a small spacecraft as it moves through an asteroid field, the stars in motion in the background. After passing through the asteroid field, followed by a brief trip through empty, star-studded space, the ship approaches the Earth and the moon which appear on the screen from the lower left corner. The moon disappears from view, but the Earth remains center screen while the spacecraft disappears into the atmosphere. All the while, of course, there is a terrific score playing in the background that combines digitized music and spoken word assuring you (among other things) that "there's a whole lot more comin'". I'm not sure what this sequence has to do with the game, but it is so well done that it is almost worth the price of admission by itself.

After this sequence, you are prompted to insert disk two into drive 0. From this, you have probably surmised that the game comes on more than one disk. You are correct -- it comes on two disks. A second drive accomplishes nothing with this game since it will load only from drive zero. This is not a handicap since it appears that only the program and the opening sequence are on disk one. The game levels and

graphics are on disk two. Once you switch disks, you will NOT be prompted to re-insert disk one.

You are taken next to the game settings menu. Use F1 to start a one player game; F2 starts a two player game. The first player controls his ship using a joystick plugged into port 2. As the game manual puts it: "the port NOT normally occupied by your ASP Dyna-Rodent Mouse Controller". The second player uses a joystick in port one. The two player mode is co-operative against the computer and game play is concurrent. The F3 key toggles between a musical background during game play (The score is the "rousing National Anthems of the Tone Terrorists of Delta 5.") and the more traditional sounds of laser guns and cannon fire. The F4 key's purpose is not immediately clear. It toggles between "PATIENT" and "IMPATIENT". After experimentation, I discovered that the "PATIENT" setting allows the beautiful wipes that the program performs between screens. They take a little longer than just flashing the next screen in the blink of an eye, but the small wait is worth it. There are a series of backgrounds and a series of wipes that are selected at random. The wipes work by apparently turning over blocks of the screen in varying sequences to reveal the screen on the back side. Very effective and very beautiful. The only other controls are effective during game play: the space bar pauses the game and the escape key aborts the mission. The manual is quick to point out that "There is absolutely no shame attached to this action, which is - of course - what any sane individual would do as soon as he catches sight of Gibban wildlife, let alone the inhabitants of Snuff". The game manual is a hoot.

So what is the game like? There are four worlds that you can choose to "vacation" on. The first is "Gibba, the most hostile planet of the Numm System". On Gibba, you travel in a helicopter gunship and a trip there will cost 100 credits. The second planet is Grone where you travel by submarine and battle strange

undersea creatures. A trip to Grone costs 200 credits. The third planet is Shreek -- travel is by jetpack and the cost is 300 credits. The last is Snuff, offering the "ultimate in blasting and plundering" and costing 400 credits. Since you begin the game with just 200 credits (sent to you by your Mom back on Venus while you attend school on Thanatopia), only Gibba and Grone are affordable. Credits for travel to Shreek and Snuff will have to be earned by plundering one or both of the first two planets.

The game play itself is nothing new. It is the type of game when your craft progresses through a cave-like world, meeting all kinds of nasty creatures and killing or being killed by them as you go. There is a small variation on the theme: when you kill something, a coin appears in its place and quickly falls off the bottom of the screen. For different creatures, different valued coins will appear. Catch them and you have just increased your supply of credits. Credits can then be used to purchase weapons or other items at one of the many Equipment Shops which you will pass during your travels. The equipment includes various kinds of missiles as well as a "Kleen Heels Supra-Drive" which increases thrust, a "Norton Thunder-Thru" which boosts health and efficiency, and a "Dr. Martens Aero-Soul Mk VI" which provides an extra clone.

"The big difference between this and other games of its type are the graphics. They are truly amazing."

The big difference between this and other games of its type are the graphics. They are truly amazing. The screen scroll is very smooth. The baddies are so detailed that they almost appear three-dimensional. And they are not only detailed, they are animated as well -- some of them requiring as many as eighteen frames of animation. And there are a lot of them at one time. Unlike many other games that load the Amiga down with a lot of graphics to keep up with, the joystick control remains quick and snappy.

Here are a few specs provided in the documentation. Psynosis is understandably proud of them.

Graphics data	1 mbyte
Sound data	250K music
	16K effects
Music sample rate	8mhz
Maximum sprite size	100 by 144 pixels
Max frames per one sprite	18
Screen update	16 times per second
Player ship update	50 times per second
Joystick scan	50 times per second

There is just one problem: There is no setting for difficulty level. The game is too difficult for me. I have played for hours, never lasting for more than a couple of minutes. I do seem to be able to make progress, but it is far too slow in coming. Difficulty to the point of frustration. Ordinarily, a game this difficult would be quickly put down and never played again -- the only thing that keeps me coming back is that it is so beautiful that I really WANT to play.

My recommendation is that if you want a real challenge and want to see how far Amiga graphics and sound can be pushed, buy this game. One more thing: That opening sequence that seemed to have little to do with the game? The documentation hints that it may be a piece from software author David Jones' next game. I'm ready and waiting.

WORDPLEX by PAR SOFTWARE, INC.

If you are looking for a quiet game that can be played by a group of people of any age, WordPlex may be what you're looking for. WordPlex is a game designed around the popular "Wheel of Fortune" television show. You are given a phrase and you must figure out what the phrase is by selecting letters of the alphabet and then seeing where those letters appear in the phrase.

The phrase categories provided on the program disk include Person, Place, Thing, Title, Phrase, Event, Quotation, People, and Cliche. There are 800 different phrases provided on the game disk. Additional volumes of trivia phrases can be purchased from the manufacturer. Volume One (\$17.98) provides three disks of 1000 phrases on the topics of America, Nature, and The Bible. Each disk is, of course, divided into sub-topics. Additionally, each disk, including the original program disk, may be edited. You may add your own phrases or modify those that are there.

The game will handle from one to six players. Playing a one player game is probably the world's ultimate bore - there is no computer opponent and no challenge. Played against other opponents, however, the game is a lot of fun. You get the traditional spin of the wheel to determine the points to be earned for each correct letter. The wheel, in this case, is a series of values around the border of the game screen. When you "spin" the wheel, a block of a different color moves around the "wheel" to stop at a random block. The special values of "Free Spin", "Bankrupt", and "Loose Turn" are there to provide the necessary element of chance. Following the spin you may choose your letter or "buy" your vowel (if you can afford it).

There are several game options worth mentioning. First, you may select the number of rounds which can comprise a game -- that is, the number of phases which will be solved. After the

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Computer Eyes

C64 Review by Jerald Hondorf

Reprinted from the Newsletter of COCUG (Omaha, Nebraska)

Last month, I purchased COMPUTER EYES by Digital Vision, the only video digitizer for the C-64. I purchased it from Tenex Computer Express for \$99.95 plus shipping. Basically, it will take standard video output from a video camera, tape or disk player and digitize the output to a "photo". You may have seen this type of thing at a county fair or on T-shirts. With some fine tuning and time, COMPUTER EYES will make a good high resolution photo with up to 8 shades of gray.

The hardware itself is simple. It consists of a "box" which plugs into the user port of the C64/C128. The box has 2 dials. The first is "Sync" which is used to adjust to the video output. The second is "Brightness". This is the only real control for the quality of the photo. It adjusts the density of the light from the video source. A beginner will always find it better to adjust with darker adjustments. The system does require a video cable which can be plugged into the "VIDEO OUT" on your camera or VCR. Digital Vision will sell this cable for \$30, but it is standard coaxial cable that can be found in most electronic type stores.

The software is likewise simple; so simple in fact that it is limited in its capabilities. Upon loading, 11 selections are provided.

1. **HELP** - gives a 1 line assist on each menu item.
2. **ADJUST SYNC** - works with the box to match video output.
3. **BRIGHTNESS** - works with the box to set brightness.
4. **NORMAL** - takes a black and white 6 second photo
5. **4 LEVEL** - photo with 4 shades of gray - 25 secs.
6. **8 LEVEL** - photo with 8 shades of gray - 50 secs.
7. **VIEW** - most recent image.
8. **SAVE** - in unpacked (40 blocks) or packed.
9. **LOAD** - any saved image.
10. **CATALOG** - directory of saved photos.
11. **EXIT** - takes you to the Twilight Zone.

One problem in producing high quality photos

can be seen in the amount of time needed. People do not enjoy sitting still for almost a minute. It is easier with a VCR where you simply need to pause the tape or disk for the time required. With the latter, be sure to work the paused picture to remove the "line" in the middle. Another problem with the software is that in adjusting the brightness, the scans made of the picture are highly distorted. Digital Vision actually calls this a "Commodore quirk" instead of taking the blame for not correcting this. The final photo, however, is not affected.

The most surprising item missing from the menu is a print command. I consider this to be the greatest problem with the software. I expected to open the package and start printing pictures. Not so. There is no printer utility that comes with the disk provided, a fact not mentioned in the user manual. Digital Vision's solution is to have customers buy one or more of its "companion" disks which will convert the photo to either Doodle, Newsroom, Print Shop, or Print Master. These cost about \$15-\$20 each and will only save a portion of the photo!

I would suggest one of several alternatives I have found to work. If you have a screen dump program or cartridge, give it a try. Another good possibility is **ICON FACTORY** by Springboard. It will convert **COMPUTER EYES** photos to any of the following formats: **Billboard Maker**, **Animation Station**, **Print Shop**, **Print Master**, **Blazing Paddles**, **Supersketch**, **Newsroom**, **Doodle**, **Koala**, and **Flexidraw**. Also, if you get the version with the **GRAFIX LINK**, you can even convert it to **GEOS**!



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Microbotics' HardFrame/2000

Amiga Hardware Review by Thom Brooke
From the Amiga Users of the Heartland Newsletter

INTRODUCTION

I just bought a new A2000 to replace my aging A1000, mostly because I felt I was going to need the expandability. While I have some expansion memory for "Alphie" (the 1000), there just aren't a lot of manufacturers making boards to the old square form factor. Naturally, the first thing on the list for "Bettie" was a hard disk; the question was: which one?

This review is about my choice: the Microbotics HardFrame/2000, with the Seagate ST296N. I'm going to take things chronologically, starting with why I chose the HardFrame, moving on to installation and then everyday use. There's a brief summary at the end for those of you who don't want to read so much.

One thing that's not in here is comparison of the HardFrame with other controllers. I don't think it's fair to compare the product I have with those I don't. I know some things about the HardFrame now that I didn't know while I was looking, and I'm sure there are things I still don't know about the other controllers. How can I be unbiased if I haven't all the facts?

IN THE BEGINNING

I was initially attracted to the HardFrame by Microbotics' glossy full page ads in Amazing Computing and other sources. A large part of this attraction was the advertised speed of the controller and the ability to boot from a Fast File System (FFS) partition. I planned on doing a lot of work with the hard disk and the DMA (Direct Memory Access) was essential. I also wanted a SCSI controller. I don't think the Amiga will be the last machine I'll own, and it would be nice if I could reuse as much hardware as I can. Any machine in my future will support SCSI before ST506 (the IBM-PC disk interface).

As for features ... well, the HardFrame is loaded. It is DMA, which means that raw transfer rates are going to be pretty fast -- but maybe at the expense of graphics or sound (since both the controller and the custom chips will be contending for the bus). Microbotics claims that the HardFrame has very efficient bus access, which may ameliorate this somewhat.

It is a "hard card" design, which means that a 3 1/2 inch drive can be mounted directly to the card. This saves a drive bay, but makes the card wider than a single slot. If the HardFrame is mounted in the first slot, the drive hangs over into the dead space between the slots and the power supply. Unfortunately, this is where a co-processor board goes, and the drive may get in its way.

As advertised, the HardFrame does boot from a Fast File System (FFS) partition. This means you

don't need a small "old file system" partition hanging around just to boot from. It also "automounts". That means it stores the partition information on the disk itself (in the "rigid disk blocks"), so it can mount the partitions itself. The result is that you don't need a mountlist entry for any of the disk's partitions, and you don't need to "MOUNT" them in the startup sequence. Awfully convenient.

HARD DISK HUSBANDRY

The drive I was looking for was something SCSI, big, and fast. The HardFrame has been tested with MiniScribe, Rodime, Quantum, Micropolis, Seagate

"A large part of this attraction was the advertised speed of the controller and the ability to boot from a Fast File System (FFS) partition"

and other drives, so I felt fairly safe. I went looking for the biggest, fastest, and cheapest drive I could find. I tracked down a Seagate ST177N (3 1/2", 60MB, 28ms access); they were out of stock, so I had to suffer with the Seagate ST296N (5 1/4", half-height, 80MB, 28ms access). Be careful, though, the 2000 only has a slot for a half-height drive; if you get a full-height unit, you ought to get an external case too. Because the HardFrame is a SCSI controller, I can add six MORE drives to "Bettie" with just a cable. Grin.

The list price for the HardFrame/2000 controller is \$329, but you can find it mail order for about \$240. It's not the cheapest out there, but it is reasonable. The ST296N can be found for a little over \$500, so you can get a full 80MB system for about \$750. Remember when non-DMA 20MB disks cost over \$1000? Sheesh! This is the life!

INSTALLATION

Inside the box was the board, a disk, some warranty papers, four screws (for mounting a drive to the card), and one sheet of paper with instructions on ONE SIDE. PANIC! How can I POSSIBLY install a controller from one sheet of paper?

"Step 2" Print out the on-disk HardFrame.UserGuide file and read it carefully."

Oh. How silly of me (Blush). The UserGuide turned out to be just over 11 pages, and very clearly

written. It took me step by step through the installation and setup of the disk. I do wish they had left little check-boxes in the margin, so I could mark off each task as I finished. I made my own.

The physical installation was simple: take off the case, set the jumper to disable autobooting (see the note below), mount the disk, slide in the card, plug in the drive. How tough can it be? The software installation was nearly as easy. Everything is set up from the Workbench. Boot from the supplied floppy, click on the "hard format" program, wait; click on RDPrep to define the partitions, answer the questions; use the standard AmigaDOS "format" command for each partition; copy Workbench onto your disk. Reset the autoboot jumper, and you're ready to roll!

Okay, so things weren't quite that simple. There were three mistakes in the instructions. First, the sample session with RDPrep had some prompts which didn't exactly match the program itself; no great shakes, since the real prompts were close enough that I could figure it out. Second, the instructions said the board was shipped with the autoboot jumper "open"; mine was closed, so I opened it. Third, and most disconcerting, all the documentation said I was supposed to have five jumpers on the board, and no matter how many times I counted them I came up with seven. Since all the references were "from the top jumper", I elected to ignore the bottom two. It worked, but it was scary.

SMOKE TEST

So, after all that installation I plugged it all back together, put the autoboot jumper back on, and powered it up. ZOOM! Things started whirring, lights started blinking, and the drive started clicking. And just when it was looking so promising, the "insert Workbench disk" screen showed up. It's not supposed to do that!

Grumble, grumble, press Control-Amiga-Amiga. Whirrr, blink, click, and boots right up! It turns out that the HardFrame controller has two time-out settings: 30 seconds and 5 minutes. The latter, however, is for diagnostics and troubleshooting, as it has a habit of sending data out the serial port periodically; not recommended if you're downloading a large file. I had mine set a 30 seconds, but I only counted 20 from power-on to "insert Workbench". Maybe it's a timer in 1.3 rather than the controller. In any case, I have to warm-boot every time I cold-boot (if that makes any sense), but once she's warm she comes right back.

PROOF IN THE PUDDING

I'm a consumer, not a benchmarker, so I'm not going to spout any numbers. I didn't test the controller while multitasking with graphics and sound, and I don't have a second hard drive. What I have done is use the HardFrame in a day to day environment, trying everything from compilers to games.

And let me tell you, it's nice. Everything loads

quickly, even Roger Rabbit, and I don't have to burn RAM: to make my commands faster because they're fast enough loading off of disk. My startup-sequence takes about 30 seconds to run Pop-CLI, FastFonts, ConMan, and Arexx, as well as set five environment variables and the path, copy the ARExx script directory, and then start Workbench. That's fast enough for me.

Of course, nothing's perfect, and I do have a few gripes. The only major problem is the slow spin-up time for the disk (described above), which forces me to warm-boot Bettie right after I turn her on. I'm not sure, but I suspect this is a problem with the disk and not the controller. The '296 is a pretty big disk; a 3 1/2 inch model, or one with fewer platters, may get up to speed in time. I plan on getting another disk for the card eventually; we'll see what happens then. One nit I have to pick is that occasionally the disk will go "brrrrr" with no activity. I don't know if this is from the disk or the controller. It hasn't caused any problems that I can see, but it is a little disconcerting. Maybe it's the heads auto-parking?

Then there are the usual changes which come with any hard disk. All of a sudden the pathnames are Real long; things like "Work: Words/ Textcraft/ Articles/ HardFrame" are common. This causes a mad dash to the manuals to figure out the easiest way to type the least amount. As a result I have nearly memorized the AmigaDOS and ARP manuals in my quest for time saving scripts.

One effect of the longer pathnames is that some programs will not load: a lot of software places an upper limit on the length of a file name (usually 30, 60, or 80 characters) and a full pathname can easily run past it. So beware. Another hard disk problem is software which expects to have full run of the root or current directories. I make it a point not to keep my work files with their programs, so I can install updates easier. Look at the "default tool" values in icons created by Textcraft, AmigaBasic, or Analyze! And just about every game on my system has a custom icon built to use IconX because of the "feature".

SUMMARY

Overall impression: I'm impressed. The controller has behaved extremely well (as near as I can tell), and the disk is big and fast. I have been using the combination for roughly a month now, and it has been error-free. One grumble, two nits, and a whole lot of Ahhhhhhs! I'd recommend the combination without hesitation to anyone who asks. I can only speak for the one disk from personal experience, but I'm sure any SCSI disk from a reputable manufacturer would work as well.

WordPerfect Returns

by Lynn LeBaron
WordPerfect Corporation

OK, things are looking up, the decision has been made.

As of today (8 May 1989) WordPerfect Corporation will continue to do new development on WordPerfect for the Amiga. Three programmers will be working on both maintaining version 4.1 and Library, and additionally they will be working on a future version of WordPerfect.

Due to these limited resources, development will proceed at a slower pace. No attempt will be made to do a 6.0 product for the time being. However, features will be added to the current product to move it in that direction.

Currently, the first priority is to complete the maintenance update of 4.1. This should take less than a month.

Next, development will be done on the new version. The current plans are not complete, but here are some of the ideas:

- 4.2 file format
- Print preview
- Sort
- Document comments
- ARexx support
- Non-interactive spell checking
- Better scroll bar support
- Other 4.2 & 5.0 enhancements (dependent on demand & time)

We can now move forward and get back to doing some real work on the Amiga.

Please let me know of any opinions you have on the next version of WordPerfect.

We have not totally ruled out graphics support, it is something we are considering, but with the limited resources it is hard to justify. We will, of course, be looking at fixing the anomalies of 4.1 (scroll bars) along with adding the new features.

New Stuff I Just Got Continued from Page 2

preset number of phases the game ends and the winner is declared. The number of rounds can be anywhere from 3 to 18. Secondly, you get to select the time limit. There is a time limit for spinning the wheel and for selecting a letter. It can be set between 5 and 20 seconds.

There is just one problem I have with this game. I don't like the timer. I would like an option to turn it off. With a group of people playing, it is easy to get sidetracked and before you know it, your time limit is up. As an alternative, a pause feature could be provided which would accomplish the same thing.

My opinion, in spite of the single shortcoming, is very favorable. Thumbs up.

**DATASTORM by VISIONARY DESIGN
TECHNOLOGIES, INC.**

I don't have much to say about this game yet because I haven't played it. I unpackaged it during the first week in July. I tried to boot it several times and kept getting the message "Fatal Disk Error - Please Reboot". So I returned the disk to manufacturer for a replacement. I received the replacement(?) disk yesterday but the same problem exists. So far I have

tried disconnecting everything from my computer except my memory expansion.

I have read quite a few reviews on this game in a number of magazines. They have all been favorable. I'd like to try it. There are several possibilities for my problem:

1. My disk drive may be slightly off causing the heavy copy protection to fail. Since I have not had a similar problem with any other product, this is probably unlikely. If it turns out to be the case, Visionary Design Technologies needs to correct or improve their copy protection methods.

2. The game may be having a problem with my memory expansion. Since I am running an Amiga 1000 with a 2 megabyte Microbotics expansion, this would be another problem for Visionary Design Technologies. This is not an unusual setup.

3. I have received two bad disks in a row from the company (or they returned my original disk). Either case is not acceptable.

I'll let you know next month what I find out. In the meantime, be wary.

GVP Impact 500 Hard Disk/RAM Expansion Unit

Amiga Hardware Review by Jerry Smithers
From the Amiga Users of the Heartland Newsletter

From the first, I was led to believe by some who are much more knowledgeable than I that one of the drawbacks to the A500 was future expansion. Buy the 500, the prevailing wisdom taught, and you might be sorry later on ... particularly if you ever want to add memory or a hard disk.

The operative work in the paragraph above is "was". GVP has very successfully overcome many of the expansion limitations of the A500 with its Impact 500 HD/RAM Expansion unit. A list of some of the features of the Impact 500 will help explain:

- Choice of SCSI HD sizes ranging from 20 - 80 MB, including the Quantum 45 and 80 MB drives.
- Autoboot, when ordered with optional 1.3 ROMs installed in both A500 and on the ROM/RAM card (internal in Impact 500).
- Quasi-DMA achieved through buffering.
- Auto-config RAM expansion (2 MB) -- just plug the

(more economical) 1 Meg X 1 chips (16) into the card and go!

- SCSI pass-through for CD ROM or "future expansion" later on, should the urge hit and your checkbook can stand it.
- Relatively compact size -- sits just off the left side of the A500 and plugs directly into the bus connector; generally not in the way.

My setup is a 30 MB autoboot/RAM expansion system running a Seagate SCSI 3.5" HD. Disk operation is very quiet and very fast! You almost cannot hear the drive operate. (The fan is a different story).

On cold boots, the drive runs a set of self tests, then loads the WB screen. This operation is relatively slow; approximately 45 seconds. Warm boots, however, are faster -- about 30 seconds. Remember,

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Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing

Amiga Software Review by Jerry Smithers
From the Amiga Users of the Heartland Newsletter

All the world is divided into two camps; those who can type and those who drive themselves to distraction every time they confront a keyboard. Well, take heart all ye who wish you could. You can ... with a little help from Mavis Beacon.

"Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing" is just about everything a program of this type should be. Above all, it takes the pain out of learning how to type.

Mavis is a compassionate teacher. She lets you learn at your own pace, yet keeps the pressure on so you improve, almost in spite of yourself.

As you boot the program, you are given choices; you can get to know Mavis' classroom, the lab, and where everything is located, what it's for and how it might help you. You can then move on to your lesson. Another choice lets you design your own lesson, otherwise (as your lessons progress) Mavis will custom design your lessons based on your individual weaknesses!

To walk you through the program in agonizing detail would be long and boring. Rather, know this about Mavis Beacon Teaches Typing:

1. The program loads your lessons on the "chalkboard" in yellow and you type what's on the board. What you type appears immediately below what's on the board.
2. Hit the wrong key and you'll know it!
3. As you type, shadowed fingers type exactly what you type, as you type it! This gives the student a

visual reference of what he or she is typing and where the keys are placed.

4. Prior to starting your lesson you identify yourself (for your permanent record) and set the speed at which you wish to be tested. The computer then keeps track of your speed and accuracy and reports words/minute achieved, accuracy and net words/minute.

5. At the end of your lesson your scores are saved and your performance can be shown in any of several (20) graph/chart forms showing, among other things, speed by individual key.

6. Optional clock and metronome tools can be toggled on and off to aid in your practice.

7. Just for fun there is an arcade-quality "Road Race" course which pits your typing speed against an opponent's speed. You type from behind the driver's seat.

There may be other features of the program I have not explored (broke the wrapper not too long ago). If I discover any of particular interest or be-dazzlement I'll be sure and report.

In the meantime, know that Mavis is great fun and very productive! To say that it's strictly kids' stuff is to take away from a wonderful and inventive method of teaching ANYONE how to type.

Yes, my wife's kids, ages 13 and 11, love it. Yes, my son, age 16, loves it. Yes, I love it, too...and I know how to type!

GVP Impact 500

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even under 1.3 the boot partition (the HD has to boot from it's own partition), is not operating under the fast file system, so boot times are not remarkable. Saving and reading files, however, are remarkable!

WordPerfect loads from my partition DH1: in about 3 seconds. A 5K file saves in less than a second. For the typical 500 user, all too accustomed to the old "gronk and wait" routine associated with these operations, this is Heaven!

The HD was extremely easy to format. Load the GVP setup disk (GVP even provides a backup!) in DF0:, warm boot and answer two or three questions about number of partitions and their size and that's it. Period! GVP takes care of the rest.

For the record, I have my HD divided into three partitions:

DH0: (2 MB) is my "boot" partition, containing all the usual WB dirs and a number of GVP files and texts (GVPScripts). This partition contains: 1) several utilities, including Utilimaster, 2) a drawer called "Extras" which contains, among other things, my HD backup program, QuarterBack, 3) my telecom program, GT, 4) IconLab, 5) the calculator (moved from one of the WB drawers), 6) TexEd and some other things. There's not a lot left of the original 2 MB.

DH1: (15 MB) is set up for productivity; WordPerfect, MaxiPlan, and File II SG.

DH2: (15 MB) is set up for graphocs-related work; DPaint II, a drawer for slideshows, FantaVision, PageStream, Professional Page and some others.

AMAZING

Computer
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SYSTEM SPECIALS

Amiga 500 System

A500 CPU w/512k
Additional 512k (1Meg Total)
Color Monitor
External 3.5" Disk Drive (2 Total)

\$1,219⁰⁰

Amiga 2000 System

A2000 CPU w/1Meg
Color Monitor
Additional 3.5" Internal Disk Drive

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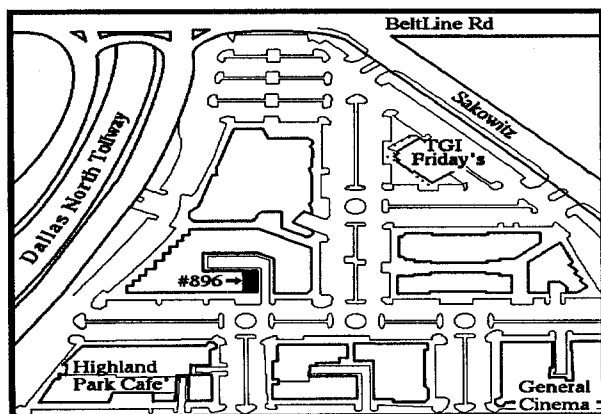
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Virus

An Amiga Software Review by Michael B. Cox From the Amiga Users Group of Kansas City Newsletter

I know, I shouldn't have done it. But I was bored. And if I have perpetuated the myth of the Amiga being a "games machine," forgive me. I was only looking for a diversion before delving back into an evening of hard drive backups... Truly, that's really the way it happened. I was at a local software store, and bought the game VIRUS on impulse. I had heard some talk about the game's graphics, and decided to give it a shot.

VIRUS is a game written by David Braben and distributed by Rainbird Software from the U.K. The box boldly proclaims VIRUS to be "the most infectious game ever." The front of the box also says it's for the Amiga, "All Models." More on this later.

The game comes on one disk, with a small ten-page manual. The manual covers loading instructions, media guarantee, game controls, gameplay, and the types of individual foes. The premise of the game is this: "You are the pilot of the latest generation of Hoverplane; your orders are to defend the country against waves of attacking alien spaceships. The alien race are intent on polluting the landscape by spraying it with a debilitating red virus. "Your Hoverplane is equipped with a long-range scanner, a laser cannon, and a limited supply of intelligent homing missiles."

The game boots in about one minute, with the screen slowly cycling from the light grey color of the Amiga system test, to a deeper and deeper yellow. You are then presented with a title screen, which is none too impressive. In fact, the graphics of the game itself are in low resolution, and not too detailed, but they are FAST, with a rather convincing three-dimensionality to them.

You can play VIRUS using the mouse or the keyboard. Unfortunately, I found the mouse to be extremely sensitive. As it controls both the attitude and the direction of the craft by its position, it was all too easy to overshoot the desired attitude. Most of the time, this resulted in the Hoverplane blasting straight down in an inverted position into the Earth. One mouse button controls the laser cannon, and the other controls your thrust. The keyboard space bar releases the homing missiles. The keyboard option of control is much more predictable, but also requires more concentration. Thankfully, after choosing this option, you are presented with a screen allowing you to use either the default keys (A,Z,<,>,Ctrl, and /) or those of your own choosing.

To begin the game, you lift off from the launch site, and seek out possible foes using the long-range scanner display in the upper left corner of the screen. Different types of enemy craft are represented by

different colored dots. The terrain is fixed; exceeding the upper boundaries of the map cause you to re-emerge at the bottom of the map.

The sounds of the game are digitized, and all but the sound of the laser cannon seem well matched to the feel of the game. The noise generated by the laser is sort of a "pock, pock, pock" sound, and simply sounds cheesy. On the other hand, the sound made by the rocket engine's exhaust as it strikes the water of a lake on a low-level attack run is GREAT. And if you look closely, you'll see fish leaping from the water as you pass!

The terra firma of the environment is a solid patchwork of colors, and its best feature is the contoured three-dimensional rolling hills. Flying over the fields at high speed produces a very nice, fast, scrolling screen. And yes, the hills and trees will come up and bite you if you don't watch your altitude!

Points are made by shooting alien craft, or by destroying virus-infected trees. NEGATIVE points result from blowing up your own bases or healthy trees (I don't know what happens if you kill a fish!).

The most disappointing aspect of this game (other than the mouse response) is that you have to be right atop of an enemy ship before you see it. You can know the general area by observing the scanner, but the view on the monitor is very narrow. If your foe is also coming after you, it is not difficult to get him in sight. But if he is fleeing, you can only chase him by following his scanner dot. Indeed, the main object in view at all times is your own ship, as the display is not from your cockpit, but rather that of a mysterious third party.

Another disheartening thing about this game is found on page 2 of the manual: "Please note that the presence of any RAM expansion or non-standard hardware may inhibit the correct operation of the game." Now, why not mention that on the OUTSIDE of the box? That fact, plus the rather obvious connection between the title and the recent media blitz computer viruses make me wonder about the integrity of Rainbird Software Company. To their credit, the game worked flawlessly on a 3-Meg A2000 w/1.3 Kickstart ROM.

Lastly, the game is copy-protected, but doesn't seem to thrash the drive heads abnormally. It can be backed-up with a commercial back-up utility.

All in all, not a bad game, and not too expensive by Amiga standards (\$23). Let's say, out of five stars, four and a half stars for graphical concepts; four stars for gameplay/plot; and three stars for the user interface. With a little work, this could be an extraordinary game!

METCOM*89 ALERT

Ned Kelly

METCOM*89 is coming to the Arlington Convention Center on Saturday, October 14, from 10:00 AM until 5:00 PM. There will be a flea market like last year where Commodore hardware and software can be bought and sold. So go through your inventory now and begin setting aside those things you no longer want and need. As show time draws nearer we will be getting back to you with the details on what to do with your things for the flea market.

CALL FOR AUTHORS

Bill Raecke

Are you tired of reading my articles? You can help correct that situation. Contribute an article for next month's newsletter. Most of you have some special knowledge to share -- or information on a new program or piece of hardware you just bought. Share that information. You may upload your article to the MCCC ASCII BBS or to Startext -- or you may mail it to me.

Write an article today!

GVP Impact 500

Continued From Page 8

As for GVP, the company, I must give them my highest compliments. Not only is their product excellent, their customer service is excellent, as well. Case in point. I recently ordered 2 MB of RAM chips to plug into the expansion card. Found a dealer in TX with a great price on Toshiba 1 Meg 100ns chips. checked the number of the chips with GVP and was told they would work fine (anything faster than 150ns should work, according to the docs). They didn't!

Called GVP and reported serious memory errors. They were aware of the problem and informed me they had learned 80ms chips were needed for proper operation. When I told them I could not exchange the RAM chips, GVP offered to exchange them for me at no charge. I understand they were shipped Friday (4-22). That is customer service ... and they did it with a smile.

Yes, there is a down side, but it's not too steep:

1. It's either 2MB of 1 Meg RAM chips or no expansion RAM. The expansion card is not offered in a 256K config. and the system will not recognize just 1MB of 1 Meg chips.
2. The fan ... it's a little loud. It's kinda *loud*. It's

LOUD, partly because it sits in front of the monitor and the fan noise bounces back at you. But, you get used to it.

3. The unit must plug directly into the A500. It cannot be tethered via a ribbon connector.



4. The controller eats RAM by the pound. By the time I get to WB, my (current) 1MB of RAM is down to 667K. That's because the GVP mountlist, which is part of the GVP WB setup installed automatically, contains entries for everything from DF2:, a 5 1/4 floppy, to RAD:, and sets up buffers (32 for HD partitions) for each hardware device. But the speed is incredible!

Other than these considerations, I have nothing but praise for the device and for the company that makes it.

The Impact 500 is a fast, reliable device with built-in RAM, power supply and fan. The design and color of the "box" compliments the A500 nicely. I should also plug Double E Computer Systems and Jay Reischl for the assistance in helping me decide on the GVP and in providing wonderful dealer support after the sale. They were great.

So all you 500 owners, this is the one I recommend.

Amiga By-The-Loop

Brent Wood

This is a good month to stay indoors and work on that fine utility you're creating or that killer animation that is going to knock everyone's socks off or that fine musical score that just may make the top ten! It's also a good month to attend your chapter meeting to get all the latest info on the Amiga happenings that will affect the way we all use our computers.

Of course, it would help if we could keep our hosts informed as to our meeting habits. Sorry if anyone was inconvenienced by the incorrect info that security at the Richland Hills Church was giving out. We did not meet at the recreation center, as some were told. A scheduling foul-up was probably to blame. Our meeting was omitted from the schedule that they had and some people were sent to the rec center.

Those of us that got past the guard got to hear Scott Lamb go into more detail about AmigaDOS 1.4. A major revision to the DOS.

Many new features that you probably haven't even dreamed of.

Scott also booted his

showed us a few things that the new OS will allow. When all the bugs are worked out we should have a very powerful system. Thanks Scott!

And special thanks to David Geeter (sp?) for allowing us to use part of his demo time to show everyone a little of 1.4. InterComputing sent David with an A1000 to demo the home version of Caligary, a 3-D object rendering package. I say "home" version because the professional version lists for \$1995.00. The home version is under \$300.00 list and InterComputing has it for less than that. We viewed parts of the VHS tape that comes with the package and then had some actual program demonstration from David.

Make plans to attend the next meeting on Tuesday, August 8th. 7:30 p.m. at the North Richland Hills Church of Christ. Room 208.

Amiga Central

Bill Raecke

We had a great meeting in July. You should have been there. Our normal question and answer/Amiga news session was lively and interesting. The big controversy of the night was whether it is possible to modify the Amiga 1000 to accept the new Super Agnes chip. Conventional wisdom and Commodore say "no way", but we had the text from a posting on UseNet at the meeting that claimed it was not only possible but had already been done. I guess time will tell.

The door prize of the evening was a box of Sony diskettes. The winner was Jeff Persyn.

Then the big news. Our presentation for the evening was

AmigaDOS 1.4 by Scott Lamb. We not only heard about it in great

detail, we SAW IT WORK!. The 1.4 upgrade will require the installation of the new 1.4 ROM, a new Denise chip, and the new Super Agnes chip. The Agnes chip is the same as the one currently available which provides 1 meg of chip RAM so it is possible to get this part of it taken care of now (or as soon as those chips are available locally). Because new chips are required, we naturally could not see everything function -- in particular the new resolution modes were out of the question -- but we were able to see a lot nonetheless. Here are some of the things we saw:

► A new ADD MONITOR command that defines to the Amiga what type of monitor you are using. This tells Ami which resolutions you will be able to take advantage of.

► You can have pattern filled windows. Patterns will be definable by the user.

► Disk icons appear in a window. This allows you to get to them easily when they are behind other windows.

► It is possible to "List" the contents of a disk or directory directly from the workbench. Simply activate the desired window, select the desired sort from the menu and the icons are replaced by a listing of the disk or directory contents. This function lists all files -- not just those having icons.

► The Fast File System is standard but is backward compatible with the old file system. In other words, when you format a new disk, you get FFS, but your old disks are still readable. And FFS now works with floppies as well, speeding them by about 10%.

► There is a new Workbench "TOOLS" menu which is where you can add your own entries for the applications you want.

Alpha copy of the system on InterComputing's A1000 (brought for another demo) and

► There is a "drag select" feature which allows you to select multiple icons by enclosing them in a box drawn by your mouse.

► The Workbench will now multitask. If you double click on a program to load it, control is immediately returned allowing you to do other things while the program loads.

► Lots of new gadgets and gadget features.

► Hot keys which are defined and controlled by the Amiga. They can be disabled and changed as you desire. This is a feature provided by the new "Commodities Exchange" which provides a more standardized multi-tasking environment.

► New scalable bit-mapped fonts.

This is not everything - these are just some of the highlights. We saw some things that space prevents me from listing. We saw or heard about some more things that were covered briefly in last month's newsletter. All I can say is "YOU SHOULD A BEEN THERE".

Thanks to Scott Lamb for an excellent presentation.

The August meeting will be the

CHAPTER

long-awaited
Hardware
Shootout. We
will have a CMI
Processor Accelerator,

a 68020 board and who knows what else (68030?). Be there and see the differences in speed. August 17 at the Arlington Community Center.

Arlington/Grand Prairie Eddie Allen

The Saturday workshop in Grand Prairie saw a welcome increase in attendance, along with one new member. It was good to see new enthusiasm surface again. If you have any needs, we will be happy to try to help.

The Tuesday night meeting in Arlington saw a slight increase in attendance also. Glen Herring passed out a couple of complementary programs from Precision Software in Irving, a touch typing trainer and a database starter for the C64. These have been passed out the last two meetings.

The program was presented by Charles Hinckley on the benefits of using a Genealogy program as an aid in tracing your ancestors. He demonstrated a package call PED, written by Robert Cohel for the Byteware Company. There are several programs available commercially, look in the classified ads of various magazines. The programs act as a specialized database, and depending on the one you use, allow you to fairly easily modify your lineage reporting needs. There are several genealogy associations scattered throughout the state, in addition to the help available at the public libraries, that can assist anyone interested in pursuing this.

Next month, Mr. Hank Costello, proprietor of Budget Computers in Arlington, will discuss the GEOS

environment, along with related programs which are available. He'll have good things to show and tell about the latest and greatest GEOS products.

Until then, be good, and here's hoping to see you there.

Fort Worth Mary Louise Hagemeyer

The Fort Worth Chapter had a good July meeting, with people asking questions, sharing information, reviewing disks, and welcoming new members.

Noel Moore led a lively investigation of "Where in the World Is Carmen Sandiego?", followed by a bit of "Where in the USA ----", etc.

Donald Tate reviewed disk # 810, which contains some games, music, a simple spreadsheet, utilities, and a few programs that wouldn't run.

James Dunnam reviewed #S103, which has some 80-column games and many useful utilities for the 128 and 1571.

We thank all these members for their interesting presentations.

In the BASIC department we looked at a 3-line screen dump and a 1-line sequential file reader.

In August we'll have the program everybody has been requesting -- our SYSOP, Okley Moss, will talk about bulletin boards and modems. The meeting will be Saturday, Aug. 19, 1:30 p.m., in the library on Hulen Street.

Hurst/Euless/Bedford Robyn Wilson

Our July meeting proved to be a very educational meeting. There were two demonstrations of

programs given. One was related to ham radios and the other was a type of menu system. Curtis Crago demonstrated a morse code program to help teach people to communicate over a ham radio. The program has you listen to the sounds it makes, either by one letter or word or several letters or words and has you respond to them telling the computer the correct letter or word. It times you in words per minute if you like. Curtis has a copy of this disk in the disk library that you may get by exchanging a diskette for a copy. He mentioned that people called "repeaters" relay information from one radio to another. This goes on from one area to another at a close range and soon goes to its destination which may be thousands of miles away. It is a slow process but it does get the message across. Several people told war stories about how repeaters sent their letters to their families. They were interesting to listen to. This is done on a computer by an interface module and uses the morse code mentioned earlier.

Our main presentation was given by Brad Dumler, Vice President of the Arlington/Grand Prairie Chapter. He discussed and demonstrated the Quick Brown Box, a way of logging onto the C64 or C128 and having a menu come up.

port in the back of the computer. It comes in either the C64 or C128 boxes - one is not used for both. The box is like 3/5 of a 1541 disk and holds 30 different programs as long as it fits the RAM amount of the box (32K or 64K). It has a reset switch for the system and has utilities to copy, scratch, save, initialize and do lots more. This is taken care of by the Quick Brown Box Manager. This box is useful if you do any kind of programming, especially in BASIC. Configure your box with machine language or just save the code in the box. Brad mentioned that you need to initialize the box before you start to utilize it. There is a special function called "Autostart" where a program is automatically loaded up when the computer is turned on. Hold the restore key down when turning on the machine and autostart will not load up that program, it will load up the original menu. Another feature is that when you receive the box run a checksum on it and record the information. Compare it with the information that the manufacturer sent and see if it is the same. It should be, this is a way for you, the customer, to make sure you have a good Quick Brown Box.

The cost of one Quick Brown Box is \$99.00 but can be discounted if bought in quantity. That is, if there are five people that want the box, the price will drop to \$89.00. If there are ten people, then the price will become \$79.00. Please contact me (Robyn) if there is anyone interested in buying one. I am convinced it is a worthwhile venture. Our thanks to Brad Dumler for coming to our meeting and presenting this very interesting program.

Our next meeting will take place on Saturday, August 19th at the Hurst Recreation Center at 1:30 p.m. It proves to be another interesting meeting when we have a

demonstration on different types of printers and their usage. This is not on any specific model so it may include your printer. If you have any problems or questions with your printer (or anything else), bring it to the meeting and we will see if someone can help you.

The Fine Print

The Mid-Cities Commodore Club is a not-for-profit organization devoted to the collection and dissemination of computer knowledge, to the encouragement of computer education, and to the use of Commodore computers in the home, at school, and in business. Appropriate and legal use of all types of software is encouraged by this club.

The MCCC is not connected with Commodore Business Machines, Inc. Commodore and Commodore product names (PET, CBM, VIC, C64, C128, and Amiga) are registered trademarks of Commodore, Inc.

Our meetings are open to all. Membership dues are \$20 per year or \$12 for six months and entitle the member to a monthly mailed copy of the MCCC News, free access to the club's extensive public domain and shareware software library, and discounts at many area merchants. An additional \$12 annual fee provides access to the MCCC ASCII and Graphic bulletin board systems.

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The deadline for submissions to the MCCC News is the Monday following the third Saturday of each month. Payment must accompany all ad copy. Make checks payable to MCCC and mail to P.O. Box 813, Bedford, Texas 76095.

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Calendar of Events

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|-----------|---|-----------|---|
| August 5 | MCCC Board of Directors
10:00 AM - N.Richland Hills Community Ctr.
Jack DeTore, 817-275-3762 | August 17 | Amiga Central Chapter
7:30 PM - Arlington Community Center
Bill Keatley, 817-485-0666 |
| August 8 | Amiga By-The-Loop Chapter
7:30 PM - N.Richland Hills Church of Christ
Brent Wood - 817-246-3707 | August 19 | Fort Worth Chapter
1:30 PM - Southwest Regional Library
Bob Krause, 817-292-6639 |
| August 12 | Arlington/Grand Prairie Workshop
1:30 PM - Grand Prairie Library
Louis Nailor, 214-262-4576 | August 19 | Hurst-Euless-Bedford Chapter
1:30 PM - Hurst Recreation Center
Eldor Luedtke, Jr., 817-626-0518 |
| August 15 | Arlington/Grand Prairie Chapter
7:00 PM - Arlington Community Center
Glen Herring, 817-572-0489 | Sept. 2 | MCCC Board of Directors
10:00 AM - N.Richland Hills Community Ctr.
Jack DeTore, 817-275-3762 |

September Newsletter Deadline - August 21

Normal Meeting Schedule

- | | | | |
|----------|----------------------------------|-----------|-----------------------------------|
| 1st Sat | MCCC Board of Directors | 3rd Tues | Arlington/Grand Prairie Chapter |
| 2nd Tues | Amiga By-The-Loop Chapter | 3rd Thurs | Amiga Central Chapter |
| 2nd Sat | Arlington/Grand Prairie Workshop | 3rd Sat | Fort Worth Chapter
HEB Chapter |

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